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ABSTRACT

A survey of 55 officers (39 male and 16 female) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) investigated their perceptions of the current trends in second language teaching. A list of 15 trends in both classroom approach and discipline development was identified from the language teaching literature, and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with those trends. Results for each trend are graphed. In summary, these leaders see themselves as both globally and locally concerned about language teaching, and as a group of teachers who are in the process of becoming a profession and of setting their own agenda. A number of additional trends were identified by respondents, some of which, it is contended, appear contradictory and require clarification. Contains 46 references. (MSE)

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Chapter 2

ED 415 693

Where Are We Now? Trends, Teachers, and Classroom Research

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Imagine that you have been hired by JR (Japan Rail) to teach a special class on one of their newest express trains. You teach in a special classroom which has been built in the train. You glance out the window as the train pulls out of the station and then turn your attention to your class. The class goes well and the hours fly by. You take a break and look out the window, but the scenery is different and you wonder to yourself, where are we now?

As the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) faces the 21st century and the beginning of the new *JALT Applied Materials* (JAM) series, it seems appropriate to ask the question, where are we now and by implication, where are we going? The working hypothesis for this article is that being a language teacher in Japan is like riding a fast moving train. Every so often it is a good idea to look out the window and reflect on just where we are, where we are going, and perhaps what we might do when we arrive. This article will deal with three questions. The first question is, what trends are being noticed and articulated by the teaching profession at large?; the second question is, to what extent does the JALT leadership agree or disagree with these trends?; and the third question is, what additional trends do JALT leaders perceive?

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Definitions

By the word "trend," I mean an issue that is identified as a trend by one or more sources in the literature. By the term "teaching profession at large," I mean those persons teaching English as a second language anywhere in the world including Japan, especially those persons who are members of teaching organizations such as TESOL, IATEFL, and JALT, and who write articles that appear in the journals such as those published by these organizations. By the term "we" as in the sentence, "Where are we now?" I include the teaching profession at large with special emphasis on JALT members. For the purpose of this article, the term "JALT leadership," will be taken to mean those persons listed as chapter officers, SIG officers, elected national officers, and key committee persons in the April, 1994, supplement to The Language Teacher. This is not an altogether inclusive definition of JALT leadership but it has the advantage of being a relatively small group, it is a group whose names and addresses are publicly listed, and because of the offices these individuals hold they can reasonably be expected to be interested in the issue of professional trends.

The Trends

My first question is, what trends are being noticed and attended to by the teaching profession at large? From the literature, 15 trends were identified.

1. As a knowledge-based industry, we are in the process of becoming part of the global information network (Ashworth, 1991; Bowers, 1994; Fanselow, 1987; Schinke-Llano, 1991; Widdowson, 1986, 1992).
2. We are experiencing dramatic growth in numbers in our field (Alatis, 1987; Ashworth,1991; Schinke-Llano, 1991; Swales, 1993).
3. The new *Monbusho* (Ministry of Education, Science and Welfare) course guidelines will have a significant impact (Aiga, 1990; Carter, Goold, & Madeley, 1993; Goold, Madeley, & Carter, 1993; Wada, 1994, 1995; Wada & Cominos, 1994; Wadden, 1994).
4. The emergence of U. S. colleges and universities in Japan (Helgesen, 1991).
5. The JET, AET program will have an influence (Aiga, 1990; Cominos, 1992; Leedham, 1991; Shang-Ikeda, 1992; Wada, 1994,1995; Wada & Cominos, 1994; Yukawa, 1992).
6. More teachers are becoming interested in classroom based research (Allwright, 1994; Gaies, 1991; Genesee, 1994; Grosse, 1991; McDonough & McDonough, 1990; Nunan, 1989).
7. The relationship between theory and practice is becoming closer (Clarke, 1994; Ellis, 1992; Gaies, 1987; McDonough & McDonough, 1990; Schinke-Llano, 1991; Wagner, 1991; Ur, 1992).
8. There is a feeling of being adrift between two worlds because we don't have a theory to make sense of or to justify our teaching (O'Neill, 1989).
9. There is a trend towards a focus on the learner as an individual. For ex-

ample, learner training and learner development (Brown, 1991; Morley, 1987; Savignon, 1991).

10. There is a trend toward seeing teaching as unique and as having its own skills and knowledge (Freeman & Richards, 1993; Gaies, 1991; Genesee, 1994).
11. There is an increasing awareness that we are a separate discipline and not a branch of linguistics (Bahns, 1990; Grosse, 1991; Nunan, 1989; Richards & Rogers, 1987; Schinke-Llano, 1991; Ur, 1992).
12. We are becoming increasingly professional and more concerned with issues such as the development of credentials, regulations, and entry into the profession (Aitchison, 1993; Ashworth, 1991; Bowers, 1994; Clayton, 1989; Gaies, 1987; Grosse, 1991; Helgesen, 1991; Maley, 1992; O'Neill, 1990; Redfield, 1990; Swales, 1993).
13. There is a trend towards nonnative speakers playing a more important role in the teaching of English. Already most EFL teachers in the world are nonnative speakers (Brown, 1991).
14. There is a trend towards including human issues in our curriculum such as peace and environmental education (Brown, 1991).
15. Psycholinguistics is developing into a more important area for language teachers (Aitchison, 1993).

This list of trends, while well documented in the literature, is not a complete list and perhaps could never be. Rather, it represents one possible set of answers to the questions, where are we now and where are we heading?

The Response to the Survey

My second question is, to what extent do JALT leaders agree or disagree with these trends. Eighty questionnaires were mailed to persons listed as National Officers, N-SIG Officers, and Chapter Officers. As Table 1 shows, surveys were sent to all the National Officers, one representative from each SIG and one representative from each Chapter. The survey was mailed to the person in the SIG or the Chapter who was listed as president or coordinator unless that person was also listed as a National Officers in which case the survey was sent to the program chair. Fifty-five survey questionnaires were returned for a response rate of sixty-nine percent (see Table 1).

Of the 55 valid respondents, the L1 was given as English by 47, Japanese by 6, French by 1, and German by 1. There were 39 male respondents and 16 females. The average years teaching experience was 14.5 years. Some of the respondents teach at more than one type of institution. Five teach at junior high schools, ten at high schools, thirty-four at colleges or universities, eight at commercial language schools, five at home, four at *senmon gakko* (vocational schools), and seven teach in business in-house programs. The most typical respondent

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Table 1
Survey response

	mailed	returned invalid	returned	per cent valid
National Officers	8		8	1.0
Appointed Officers	10	1	8	.80
Committee Chairs	7		6	.86
Editors	5		3	.60
JALT 94 Conference	4	1	3	.75
N-SIG Coordinators	10		6	.60
Chapter Officers	36	1	21	.58
Totals	80	3	55	.69

Note: One survey was returned due to an incorrect address and two surveys were returned unanswered.

was an English speaking male working at a college or a university who has about fourteen years teaching experience.

To summarize the trends into one sentence, we are a global (trends 1, 4, and 14) yet local (trends 3 and 5), expanding (trends 2 and 13) group of teachers who are in the process of becoming a profession (trends 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15) and setting our own agenda (trends 6, 7, and 9).

For a breakdown of the answers see Appendix. For a more visual representation of the results, the following pages present the trends seen as bar charts. Percentages have been rounded-off to the nearest whole number and, therefore, the totals are not always exactly 100%.

Additional Comments From Current JALT Leadership

My third question is, what additional trends do JALT leaders perceive? The trends survey contained one open question which asked respondents if there were any trends they felt had been overlooked and if there were, to please write them in a provided space. Following are the additional trends suggested by the individual respondents.

The JALT leadership perceives a trend towards:

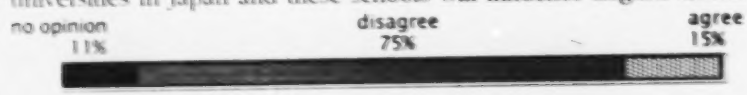
1. Students learning more than one foreign language.
2. Students learning languages in the host language country; participating in more overseas English study courses.
3. Studying the similarities in Asian (Japan, Korea, Indonesia, China) learners of English.
4. Language teaching as a business.
5. Using English to teach culture.

Trend 1. As a knowledge-based field, we are becoming part of the global information network.

Trend 2. There is a trend toward growth in our field.

Trend 3. The new *Monbusho* course guidelines will have a significant impact.

Trend 4. There is a trend towards the establishment of U.S. colleges and universities in Japan and these schools will influence English teaching.

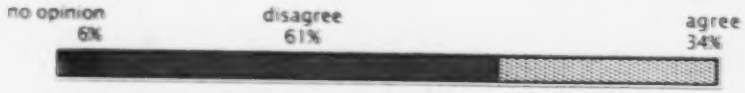


Trend 5. There is a trend toward the JET, AET program having a greater influence on us.

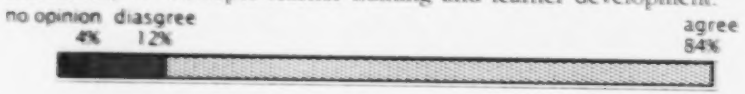
Trend 6. There is a trend towards teachers becoming more interested in classroom-based research.

Trend 7. There is a trend toward the relationship between theory and practice becoming closer.

Trend 8. There is a trend toward feeling lost between two worlds because we don't have a theory to make sense of or to justify our teaching.



Trend 9. There is a trend towards a focus on the learner as an individual, for example learner training and learner development.

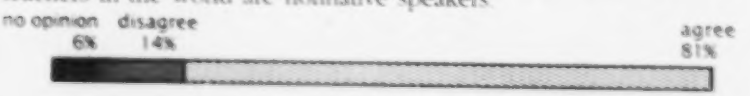


Trend 10. There is a trend toward seeing teaching as unique and as having its own skills and knowledge.

Trend 11. There is an increasing awareness that we are a separate discipline and not a branch of some other discipline, for example linguistics or literature.

Trend 12. There is a trend toward becoming more concerned with the development of teaching credentials.

Trend 13. There is a trend towards English nonnative speakers playing a more important role in the teaching of English. Already most EFL teachers in the world are nonnative speakers.



Trend 14. There is a trend towards including human issues in our curriculum such as peace and environmental education.

Trend 15. There is a trend toward psycholinguistics becoming more important for language teachers.

6. Introducing English into the school curriculum at an earlier age.
7. Children beginning to learn EFL at an earlier age.
8. Junior high school and high school teachers being better speakers of English and therefore graduating better students.
9. Presenting qualitative research under the guise of pseudo-scientific quantitative research.
10. Curriculum evaluation by both teachers and students increasing at the university level.
11. Decentralized authoritarian control.
12. Using part-time, non-tenured, non-professional instructors.
13. Not opting for any one particular method, a trend back toward eclecticism.
14. Looking too hard for trends (especially where *Monbusho* is involved).
15. Teaching English as an international language (EIL).
16. Moving back to grammar.
17. Learning objectives which are more narrow than "communicative competence," e.g., ESP, translation courses, survival courses, English for academic purposes.
18. ESP/EST.
19. Teacher development.
20. Testing.
21. Downplaying the learning of English because the rest of the world is going to learn Japanese.
22. Employing native English speakers more for their market value than for their effectiveness as teachers.
23. Limiting instruction, skills, and content to the elements students will need to become efficient corporate components and heroic consumers.

This list contains some trends that are cryptic and in need of explanation and clarification. In addition, all of these "additional trends" need additional support

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such as references from the literature or empirical support from other sources.

In addition to additional trends, some respondents included comments.

Respondent Comments

- There is tremendous variability in the definition of what a language teacher is.
- Teachers should pay more attention to the relationship between CLT and University entrance examination; more study should be done in this field, especially experimental research.
- Some of these trends I wish were happening but are not.
- It is disappointing that many JETs in high schools can't expect universities to change their exam structure. The government should take some measure to introduce aural tests in the national uniform exams.
- I hire part time teachers for universities and I agree that better qualified ESL teachers in terms of degrees are available. An MA or Ph.D. in TESOL plus publications is almost required.
- As a *gaijin* (foreigner) I circled 6 for many of the trends, but I believe that for the Japanese teachers it would be a 1 or a 2.

Discussion

One issue for discussion is who do the respondents of this survey represent and who do they not represent. Not every leader currently active in JALT was sent a survey and some that were sent a survey chose not to respond. The Japanese leadership is under represented. University teachers are adequately represented, but teachers in other institutions are not, and as a result their insights are lacking. Nevertheless, given these limitations, it is my experience in JALT that the group who responded to this survey do, in fact, reflect the JALT Executive Board as it is presently constituted and in that sense can be said to represent the thinking of the current JALT leadership. It remains for future surveys to document change. For research into trends, both global and in Japan, to continue, it would probably be necessary for teacher groups such as JALT to officially support a larger-scale survey.

Comments on the Survey

This questionnaire survey was not field tested, reports no reliability coefficients, and offers no validation. For these reasons this article should be thought of as an interpretative essay reporting insights rather than research reporting generalizable results. There were two areas of comments by the respondents of the survey. Both areas are concerned with clarity. One is the issue of instrument clarity and the other is the issue of theoretical clarity.

Respondents were asked to circle the number for each question that best showed their opinion. I should have stipulated in the directions to circle only one number because some respondents circled more than one number, thus invalidating their answer. For example, one respondent in answering trend ques-

tion number two, wrote "short term" and circled number 3 and also wrote "long term" and circled number 6. Another indication that my directions were lacking in clarity in that some respondents answered by saying in their opinion the literature indicated one position, but that their experience indicated another position. Some respondents seemed unclear about whether I meant them to answer as if they were in Japan (which they were) or from some other place.

In addition to a lack of clarity on how the survey instructions were phrased, a few respondents sensed a lack of conceptual clarity. One respondent wrote, "What I think or what teachers in general believe?" Another respondent complained that the survey was unclear because it did not specify the reference point as what each teacher personally believes, what native speaker EFL college teachers believe, what non-native speaker EFL teachers in Japanese public schools believe, or what the fresh *gaijin* in the JET program believes.

The definition of what a trend is and is not needs to be made clearer. What constitutes a trend? How does one know when a trend exists? Does agreeing with a trend signify that one is acknowledging its existence or expressing approval? These and other questions need to be discussed and taken account of in future trend surveys.

When we look at the trends from the literature listed in this paper and consider the degree of agreement or disagreement of the JALT leadership with those trends, we see that the JALT leadership agrees with most of the trends with some important differences. JALT leadership group does not believe that U. S. colleges and universities are expanding and will have a significant impact on our teaching in Japan (trend 4), it does not yet see the influence of the AET/JET program (trend 5), nor does it feel lost due to the lack of a comprehensive theory that can guide pedagogy (trend 8). In addition, the JALT leadership is not sure about there being a closing of the gap between theory and experience (trend 7). That being the case, it is not surprising that they do not experience psycholinguistics (trend 15) as being particularly helpful.

Given that the topic of this collection of papers is on classroom based research, it would be helpful to look more closely at trend 6, that more teachers are becoming interested in classroom based research. As you will recall, there was 74% agreement with this trend. We will look at the background of this trend as well as some of the issues which are involved.

Classroom Research

The classroom teacher has traditionally been a marginal research participant. For at least the last 20 years, the defining centerpiece of ESL teacher education has been the teaching method taught in the methods course (Gaies, 1991; Nunan, 1989). The methods course lacked training in classroom based research and tended to promote a method or methods for teaching (Grosse, 1991). The method (e.g. TPR, Silent Way, CLL) was often promoted by a teaching guru who viewed

the teacher as irrelevant at best or a contamination of the process at worst (Gaies, 1991). It was the teaching method that was seen as responsible for learning. The teacher's job was to correctly administer the method and/or stay out of the way of the method as it connected with the students.

The "classic" researcher has special training and special statistical tools with which to conduct research which the classroom teacher almost always does not have. Therefore, the role of the classroom teacher is to receive the research. This sets up a dichotomy of researcher as producer of knowledge and classroom teacher as consumer of knowledge (McDonough & McDonough, 1990). Because research is thus seen as a top-down arrangement coming from the researcher who is specially trained for the job, there is a mismatch between the role of the classroom instructor and the ESL researcher which makes it difficult or impossible for the two parties to communicate.

A new image is currently in the process of being formed for the role of the ESL teacher. This new image is multifaceted in that it includes both classroom practices as well as a research role. Genesee (1994) observed that the title "teacher-researcher" is part of this new image, but a mixed metaphor. On the "teacher" side of the metaphor, Genesee agreed that more teachers are currently involved in research than before and furthermore that this research is increasingly classroom based. On the "researcher" side, he expressed concern that teachers may be judged by criteria appropriate to researchers but not teachers. Allwright (1984) responded by suggesting that Genesee would be correct only if he accepts the classical definition of the researcher. Allwright pointed to the classroom and teacher pedagogical practices as the locus of an image of research more suited to teachers and the language classroom. McDonough & McDonough (1990) called this type of classroom research bottom-up research as opposed to the more traditional top-down research model.

Gaies (1991) articulated an image of the teacher as manager because in his view teaching is decision making. It is the nature and process of teacher decisions that ought to be looked at carefully in classroom research, especially as they promote change in classroom pedagogy and practices. Nunan (1989, 1990) said teachers should be monitors and researchers of their own teaching practices. To accomplish this, teachers need special training in classroom research. Appropriate forms of research include action research and ethnographic research both of which look closely at what actually happens in classrooms as opposed to what teachers believe happens. This view is shared by Grosse (1991, p. 44) who stated that a major challenge to teacher education is the "gap between what teachers and researchers think happens in the classroom and what actually goes on." A major concern underlying this discussion of teacher as researcher is how we as classroom teachers initiate, promote, and manage change and innovation in our classrooms, in our institutions, and ultimately in the larger society.

Conclusion

This paper began with the image of a train. The train was moving in unfamiliar territory and the question was asked, where are we now and where are we going? I will continue to use the pronoun "we" to indicate that the answer to this question affects the entire ESL/EFL teaching profession.

The answers to this survey seem contradictory. On the one hand, we believe teacher training and credentials are important and we are interested in classroom research, but on the other hand we don't feel a narrowing of the gap between practice and research. We believe non-native speaker teachers are becoming more important, but we suspect many non-native speaker teachers don't share this opinion. We think the new *Monbusho* course guidelines will significantly impact us, but we don't think the JET/AET program is having much influence.

The tentative conclusion reached earlier in this paper was that we are a global/local group of teachers in the process of becoming a profession and setting our agenda. It is this last issue, setting our agenda, where I sense we are not clear and which I believe gives rise to our contradictory responses. At the moment we are getting ready for the agenda task by deciding what issues we think are important and preparing ourselves for the research task ahead. We are not sure though where we want to go or how to get there, but we sense that as classroom teachers it is up to us to make those decisions and preparations and not ask others to do it for us. Small wonder that we are a bit confused.

You are now back on the train. You finish your class and look out the window as the train approaches the station. As the train pulls in you notice a sign which announces the name of the station. The sign says, Welcome To Getting Ready. You get off the train and think to yourself, "This must be the place."

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Appendix: Survey Results

	Percent No opinion	Percent Tend to disagree			Positive Response Tend to agree		
Trend	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Trend 1	.11	.02	.07	.15	.15	.30	.20
Trend 2	.04	.02	.1	.22	.22	.29	.12
Trend 3	.13	.05	.07	.15	.29	.22	.09
Trend 4	.11	.22	.38	.15	.11	.04	.00
Trend 5	.02	.13	.25	.20	.15	.22	.04
Trend 6	.04	.04	.07	.11	.20	.39	.15
Trend 7	.04	.00	.17	.26	.22	.26	.06
Trend 8	.06	.22	.22	.17	.13	.19	.02
Trend 9	.04	.00	.06	.06	.28	.39	.17
Trend 10	.08	.00	.13	.12	.17	.33	.17
Trend 11	.08	.04	.11	.04	.25	.26	.23
Trend 12	.07	.00	.06	.02	.15	.43	.28
Trend 13	.06	.00	.04	.10	.24	.39	.18
Trend 14	.06	.00	.09	.06	.26	.35	.19
Trend 15	.07	.04	.09	.24	.31	.17	.07